Water Quality Protection Division

Mississippi Canyon 252 Oil Spill, Gulf of Mexico
Region 6 Update

Subject: **Water Quality Update # 2**
Mississippi Canyon 252 Oil Spill, Gulf of Mexico

Date: May 3, 2010

Reporting Period: May 3, 2010 1300 – May 4, 2010 1300

Situation Status:

Impact Analysis

- Prepared an initial analysis of potential short-term and worst case impacts from the oil release on Gulf coast natural resources, focusing particularly on the Louisiana coast east of the Mississippi River and including the delta area. Preserving the coastal marshes from additional insult as a result of moving incident response personnel and equipment is a key concern, as is the potentially serious impacts of the oil to nesting birds and spawning aquatic species. The document contains information on coastal ecological resources at risk and provides an initial projection of how those resources might be affected. Drinking water impacts and NPDES permits and TMDL Q & A's are included.

Monitoring and Assessment

- Investigated methods for near real-time monitoring of oil in water for characterizing environmental risks. Provided comments on revised QASP. Participated in OW/ORD call to discuss baseline/ground data compilation.

Drinking Water:

- Responded to numerous information requests concerning drinking water quality.
- Drinking water intakes, public drinking water wells, and domestic wells have not been impacted by the oil sheen and are not projected to be impacted.
- Neither EPA nor the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) regulates industrial cooling or processing tank intakes nor do we regulate drinking water in offshore vessels or rigs.
- There are no restrictions or cleaning requirements for ships entering the mouth of the Mississippi and traveling upstream. If significant contamination is transferred upstream on the hulls of incoming vessels, the quality of the water near the drinking water intakes could change over time. It would take a significant amount of contamination to the hulls to cause a threat.
- Continue to coordinate closely with the LDHH on all drinking water issues.

Map above is of water intakes on the Mississippi consisting of members of the voluntary Lower Mississippi River Waterworks Warning Network and are not restricted to only public drinking water intakes. Those listed include Public Water System intakes (labeled LAXXXXX) and industrial intakes such as cooling towers or process water (labeled nonPWS).

Shellfish/Oyster Update:

- LDHH Molluscan Shellfish program, Beach Monitoring Program, and Commercial Seafood program continue to monitor the situation for change in plume status and any motion noted visually via flyovers. The Oyster Task Force is monitoring oyster harvesting areas.
- Molluscan Shellfish program staff is assisting NOAA in taking water samples, sediment samples, and oyster tissue samples for baseline analysis.

The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA)

- Continued coordination with CWPPRA agencies for potential spill impact zone. No Impact to date.
- For a list of all CWPPRA projects: http://www.lacoast.gov/cwppra/

NPDES

Confirmed Discharges Associated with Subsea Oil Recovery Option Do Not Need NPDES Permit Authorization if Authorized by OSC. This would include operations by the Deepwater Enterprise (receiving vessel for subsea oil recovering plan). It does not appear there is an NPDES general permit in place that would authorize decant/oil water separation discharges of this nature.

NPDES Staff Developed Qualitative Test Method for Visual Confirmation of Oil Impacted Vegetated and/or Sandy Coastlines. Forwarded method for consideration as part of monitoring program.

Updated NPDES Q&A on permitting issues.

Created Map of NPDES Discharges in SE Louisiana: Map highlights facilities that would be more likely to also have water intake structures that could be affected, but all appear to be well inland. NPDES wastewater permits along coast would not generally be affected by spill.

Confirmed NPDES Permits Not Required for Discharges Authorized by OSC: Lack of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits will not hold up discharges of wastewater, etc. that are part of the response. The On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) can authorize discharges that would normally require an NPDES permit.

Confirmed MODUs for Relief Well Option Can Use NPDES General GMG290000 for NPDES Permit Authorization: Mobile offshore drilling units (MODUs) operated by BP Exploration and Production, Inc. (BP) are already covered by the permit. Discharges could also be authorized by OSC.

Confirmed Applicability of EPA's NPDES Vessel General Permit (VGP) To Response Vessels: The VGP only applies to commercial vessels within inland areas of the United States and extending 3 nautical miles off the US Coast that are greater than 79 ft in length and/or have the capacity to discharge ballast water. If operating more than 3 nautical miles offshore, the

permit does not apply and discharges from response vessels within 3 nautical miles can be authorized by the On-Scene Coordinator.

Coordinated with Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality to Identify Any Potentially Affected Aquaculture Facilities: No facilities were identified.